

4) The Teacher-Scholar: Election Event Series Reinforces the Importance of Teaching Outside the Classroom

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I am convinced that much of the best teaching and learning takes place outside of the classroom. This year I had the privilege of working with students to organize a robust series of election-oriented events.

Events included:

- one televised congressional candidate debate,
- two Convention Watch parties,
- three live county candidate debates,
- four presidential (and vice presidential) debate watch parties, and
- five voter information sessions: a *Times Talk*, two election forecasting sessions, and two post-election discussions.

The American Democracy Project and Political Science Club of IU South Bend also hosted:

- six voter registration tables, and a
- seven-day classroom registration campaign, and
- eight voter information tables, reminding people when to vote and how to get information about election rules.

The series started on September 17th with a Constitution Day voter registration drive, complete with free popcorn and nachos for those who could complete Constitution-theme crossword puzzles or games. It ended with an Election Night Party in the

River Crossing “Lodge” – where more than 100 students gathered to color their own electoral college maps and share predictions as the results come in. In sum, our events reached 600 live audience members, 200 new voters, plus TV viewers in 22 counties. Series events were highlighted in approximately two dozen media stories in eight different media outlets.

Some faculty members believe that “extra-curricular” events should be reserved for Student Affairs. I disagree. I was able to use my knowledge as a researcher, educator, and academic advisor to serve as a commentator, moderator, analyst, and advisor throughout this event series. I was also able to “open” my classes up to the campus and community – letting those who aren’t my students get a “taste” of political science, and revealing to my students the possibility of life-long learning as they witness that people are eager to learn, even when they are not earning college credit. I do not view my work as the faculty advisor to the Political Science Club and Campus Director of IU our American Democracy Project as service work that falls outside of the realm of teaching. Rather, I view this work as central to my role as an educator.